



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

December 13, 2004

News Release

16 ARRESTED FOR SMUGGLING ALIENS IN U.S.

8 arrested in Miami, 8 in New York for allegedly smuggling Ecuadorians, Chinese

MIAMI-- Sixteen people were arrested Saturday and Sunday on alien smuggling charges following a nine-month investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The arrests were announced jointly today by United States Attorney Marcos Daniel Jiménez of the Southern District of Florida and ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Jesus Torres.

The arrests in this prosecution are the result of an investigation known as "Operation Palmdale," which was conducted in Miami, New York, and Ecuador by the ICE Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit.

Beginning in the spring of 2004, using immigration documents provided by undercover agents, the defendants participated in the smuggling of Ecuadorian and Chinese nationals into the United States by commercial airline from Ecuador. The defendants paid agents smuggling fees ranging from \$9,000 to \$20,000 per alien.

Eight defendants were arrested in Miami and eight others in New York. All of the defendants are scheduled to make their initial appearances today in federal court.

Fifteen defendants are charged by indictment and one is charged by criminal complaint. A total of 12 defendants are charged in five indictments, with one count of conspiracy to smuggle illegal aliens into the United States for profit, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii), and Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, and substantive counts of alien smuggling, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii).

Charged together in one indictment are defendants Julio Alfredo Castillo-Chamba and Ilda Beatriz Perez-Ruiz, both of whom were arrested in New York.

Another indictment charges defendants, Carlos Roman Pina-Reinozo, Luis Emilio Cajias-Solis, and Habibur Rahman. Pina-Reinozo was arrested in New York; the other two defendants were arrested in Miami.

Defendants Edwin Carpio and Amadeo Carpio are charged in a third indictment. The former was arrested in New York; the latter in Miami.

Charged in a fourth indictment are defendants Alfonso Rodas, Raul Rodas and Rosa Dolores Lema-Paucar, all of whom were arrested in New York.

The fifth Indictment charges defendants, Kennedy Stevenson Pale-Benavides and Juan Carlos Noboa-Perez, both of whom were arrested in Miami.

In addition to the five indictments referred to above, three indictments separately charge defendants Jose Manuel Aldaz, Ruben Hernan Zumba and Teresa De Jesus Barzola-Herrera, respectively, with smuggling illegal aliens into the United States for profit in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii), and encouraging and inducing illegal aliens to come to the United States, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(iv). All of these defendants were arrested in Miami.

A criminal complaint charges defendant Patricio Rene Farfan-Matute with smuggling illegal aliens into the United States for profit, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii). Farfan-Matute was arrested in New York.

If convicted of conspiring to smuggle aliens, the defendants face a maximum statutory term of five years in prison. If convicted on substantive alien smuggling charges, the defendants face a maximum statutory term of 15 years in prison.

"Because of this operation's success, 16 individuals that sought to profit illegally from the smuggling trade have been brought to justice," said Jiménez. "Together with our law enforcement partners, we remain committed to disrupting the smuggling trade and holding smugglers accountable for their illegal acts, no matter where in the world they may operate. I am proud of the work of our prosecutors and the agents in this case."

"Today we have dismantled a major human smuggling enterprise that funneled individuals from China and Latin America into this country illegally," said Torres. "The criminal organizations behind this scheme profited enormously at the expense of their human clients, in some cases charging as much as \$20,000 per person. Targeting the multi-billion dollar human smuggling trade is a key priority for ICE and the Department of Homeland Security."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michele Korver.

Related court documents and information may be found on the Web site of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.